

DATE: July 24, 2015

TO: Regional Planning Committee

FROM: Miriam Chion, ABAG Planning and Research Director

RE: Priority Conservation Areas: 2015 Nominations

Summary

Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs) were established at the same time as the locally nominated Priority Development Areas (PDAs) to function as complementary programs in the region's long range sustainable growth strategy. The goal of the PCA program is to support Plan Bay Area by preserving and enhancing the natural, economic and social value of open space lands amidst a growing population throughout the Bay Area.

In July 2014, the ABAG Executive Board approved an updated PCA program to allow for: 1) nullification of existing PCAs originally adopted in 2008; 2) selection of designations for existing PCAs; and 3) submission of new PCA nominations. The new program inviting PCA updates and nominations was launched August 1, 2014 with a deadline of May 30, 2015.

During that time, cities, counties and park/open space districts put forth a great deal of effort to consider previously adopted PCAs and nominate new PCAs. We commend them for this work and for demonstrating strong support for the PCA program through partnership and collaboration. Staff requests adoption of 68 new PCAs recommended in this staff report.

Process for Confirming Existing and Nominating New PCAs

The PCA program provides Bay Area localities with an opportunity to nominate areas included in their conservation strategies for regional PCA recognition. To facilitate these requests, ABAG staff created a PCA website with the application, details about the approval process, a list of frequently asked questions and resources for identifying PCA designations, benefits and co-benefits. The application is shown in **Attachment 1** and the PCA website is viewed at <http://abag.ca.gov/priority/conservation/>.

Existing PCAs

Local jurisdictions with existing PCAs adopted in 2008 were allowed to nullify one or more PCAs by adopting a resolution of opposition at a public meeting. This gave the local jurisdiction the option to weigh in on PCA nominations that they did not initiate during the first PCA round. The 90-day period to nullify existing PCAs extended from September 8, 2014 to December 8, 2014. Only one jurisdiction took advantage of the nullification process.

Sponsors of existing PCAs were asked to select a designation and resulting community benefits for each PCA that recognizes the different roles these areas serve in supporting the region's natural systems, rural economy, human health and benefits to the community. Staff provided an online tool to aid in selecting designations and benefits for PCAs. The four PCA designations are: Natural Landscapes, Agricultural Lands, Urban Greening and Regional Recreation. The designations assigned to existing PCAs are presented in **Attachment 2**.



New PCA Nominations

For new PCA nominations, the program update restricted eligible sponsors to local jurisdictions and park/open space districts. A resolution of support adopted by the sponsoring agency at a public hearing was required for a new PCA nomination. In addition, if PCAs were proposed in an adjacent agency's jurisdiction, evidence of notification to the neighboring agency was required. The nomination period opened on August 1, 2014 and extended through May 30, 2015. Sponsors were directed to submit a description and discussion of the regional and local importance of the area being nominated and the community benefits and co-benefits of the proposal. A total of 121 new nominations were received.

PCA Panel Review

A PCA panel was convened with representatives from the State Coastal Conservancy, Greenbelt Alliance and ABAG staff. The panel reviewed the applications and concluded that all PCA nominations met the requirements of the PCA program. No new nominations were discarded. However, the review panel directed ABAG staff to initiate follow-up conversations with some PCA sponsors for clarification. These conversations resulted in consolidation of PCA nominations and/or elimination of nominations that were for previously-adopted PCAs. As a result, a total of 68 PCAs are recommended for adoption.

Priority Conservation Area Nominations

Staff worked with sponsoring agencies to ensure complete applications and clarity on program goals. Each county and park/open space district employed their own strategies in selecting nominations for new PCAs. Nominations were received from jurisdictions in six counties: San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Alameda, Contra Costa and Marin.

The PCA nominations include over 400,000 acres. Sponsors identified one or more of the four designations for each PCA nomination. Of the 68 nominations, 50 PCAs include a categorization of Natural Landscapes, 48 include Regional Recreation, 23 include Urban Greening and 15 include Agricultural Lands. For a detailed list of the PCA nominations, see **Attachment 3**. For a regional map of the nominations, see **Attachment 4**.

All PCA applications are available for viewing and downloading:

http://abag.ca.gov/priority/conservation/2015_nominations/

PCA Nominations Summary

<i>Sponsor</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>Number of PCAs</i>	<i>Designations</i>
<i>City of Livermore</i>	<i>Alameda</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>UG, RR</i>
<i>City of Oakland</i>	<i>Alameda</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>NL, UG, RR</i>
<i>City of El Cerrito</i>	<i>Contra Costa</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>UG</i>
<i>City of Fairfax</i>	<i>Marin</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>NL, UG, RR</i>
<i>City of Novato</i>	<i>Marin</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>NL, UG, RR, AL</i>
<i>Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority</i>	<i>Santa Clara</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>NL, UG, RR, AL</i>
<i>City of San Francisco</i>	<i>San Francisco</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>NL, UG, RR</i>
<i>City of Menlo Park</i>	<i>San Mateo</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>NL, RR</i>
<i>Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District</i>	<i>Santa Clara and San Mateo</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>NL, RR, AL</i>
<i>County of San Mateo</i>	<i>San Mateo</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>NL, UG, RR, AL</i>

NL=Natural Landscapes; AL = Agricultural Lands; UG = Urban Greening; RR = Regional Recreation

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There were no new nominations from Napa, Sonoma or Solano counties. Sonoma will adopt a countywide park plan in 2016 and declined the opportunity to nominate new PCAs until after their park plan adoption. Solano County developed a PCA Partnership Advisory Committee comprised of local jurisdictions and open space advocates, but decided not to submit any new PCAs.

Two multi-county PCAs were nominated by the County of San Mateo: California Coastal Trail (located in Sonoma, Marin, San Francisco and San Mateo counties); and the San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail (located in all nine counties).

San Francisco was the only jurisdiction to nullify existing PCAs. A resolution was adopted to nullify the four previously-adopted PCAs in San Francisco to enable the City to thoroughly study the topic and allow for a more structured and complete nomination process at the City level. San Francisco nominated four new PCAs to replace the ones that were nullified.

OBAG PCA Grant Program

Fifteen of the original PCAs adopted in 2008 were awarded funds through the \$7.87 million One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) program. Discussions are now underway to determine the amount of OBAG funding available for PCAs in a future grant round.

Recommended Action

Staff request that the Regional Planning Committee recommend the following to the Executive Board:

- Adopt the 68 Priority Conservation Areas recommended in this staff report and listed in Attachment 3.

Attachments:

1. Priority Conservation Area Application
2. List of Priority Conservation Areas Approved in 2008/2013
3. List of 2015 Priority Conservation Area Nominations
4. Map of 2015 Priority Conservation Area Nominations

All PCA applications are available for viewing and downloading:

http://abag.ca.gov/priority/conservation/2015_nominations/